

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
8TH JUNE 2006**

**MINUTES
(18.00 – 21.15 PM)**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Allen,
Mrs Flynn, Mrs Franklin, Miss P Hall, Nicholson, Seacome and Webster
Councillor Morris as substitute for Councillor Mrs Holliday

APOLOGIES Councillor Mrs Holliday

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Leader
Deputy (Stronger and Safer Communities)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the borough council elections, particularly new members. She explained that if Members were in agreement she would find it very useful if the Committee could sit in the same places for future meetings. The Co-opted members would join the Committee at the next meeting and a seating plan would then be drawn up and circulated with the agenda so that the public would also be aware of who was who. The Committee supported this idea.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nicholson declared a personal interest in agenda item 7ii Cheltenham CAVA merger with Gloucester CVS as he was the Cheltenham Borough Council representative on Cheltenham Volunteer Centre.

Councillor Mrs Franklin declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 Gloucestershire NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a Governor of the NHS Foundation Trust.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2006 be approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Two nominations for vice-chair were proposed Councillor Webster and Councillor Allen and

votes were taken.

RESOLVED that Councillor Allen be appointed Vice-Chairman

VOTING

5 - For

4 – Against

**6. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
(Agenda item 6)**

The Strategic Director Social and Community introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He reminded Members that it had been previously suggested by the Committee that the Sports Council be invited to nominate a representative in light of new issues arising from the future work plan. However, following further discussion with the Chairman it was felt more appropriate for the Sports Council to be invited as 'an expert witness' to any meeting when items specifically relating to sports provision were being considered without any commitment to coming along to every meeting of the Committee. The Strategic Director Social and Community referred Members to the nominations received in Appendix A.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the Committee appoints non-voting co-opted members as set out in Appendix A
- ii) that the Committee invites the Sports Council as 'an expert witness' to any meeting when items specifically relating to sports provision are being discussed.

7. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

(a) By Council – None

(b) By Cabinet –

i) Single Regeneration Company Proposal (Agenda item 7i)

The Leader introduced this item which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the Cabinet had received an update at its meeting on 12th May 2006 and had raised a number of concerns as detailed in the extract draft minute. The Cabinet had invited the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate the proposal further and make recommendations back to Cabinet. The Leader also referred Members to the briefing note which had been circulated separately and which detailed the current position of the Regeneration Companies.

In response to questions, the Leader explained that the funding already in progress would not be effected by the review. He indicated that his preference would be for some cross party working with the regeneration companies to supplement the work already being undertaken so that everyone would be clear about the final decision.

Councillor Allen indicated that the issues were complex and therefore could not be dealt with sufficiently by discussion at the next meeting. He suggested that

the setting up of a small working group to look into the issues in more detail was the better option.

RESOLVED that the Committee establish a small working group consisting of Councillors Allen, Nicholson and Webster to investigate the proposal to establish a Single Regeneration Company. The working group to meet and provide an update at the next meeting with a full report before the end of the year.

ii) Cheltenham CAVA merger with Gloucestershire CVS (Agenda item 7ii)

The Leader introduced this item which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the Cabinet had received an update at its meeting on 12th May 2006 and had raised a number of concerns as detailed in the extract draft minute. The Cabinet had agreed that funding be held in abeyance pending a review of agreed outcomes and invited the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the role of GCVS (Cheltenham) in relation to

- ability to deliver agreed outcomes
- the future of the CVS
- the organisation and effectiveness of the AGM which purported to give voluntary sector agreement to the merger

Councillor Webster commented that it was not within the remit of the council to decide the future of GCVS. The members of CAVA had voted unanimously to merge with the GCVS to form GCVS (Cheltenham) and take control.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Sally Pickerin Chief Executive of GCVS confirmed that nobody had objected to or queried the decision either at the meeting or afterwards and she was not aware of any dissatisfaction.

The Committee was concerned that by not releasing funding the council would be in danger of breaching the current funding agreement. Voluntary organisations depended on council funding and it would be the people of Cheltenham that would lose out if the council held back any longer. However, the ongoing performance of GCVS (Cheltenham) and future funding would be reviewed in Autumn 2006 as part of the annual Conditional Offer of Grant review process.

RESOLVED that the Committee declines the Cabinet's invitation declined to review the role of GCVS (Cheltenham) and instead recommends to the Cabinet that funding be released immediately and that the Conditional Offer of Grant be reviewed by officers as part of the annual review process in Autumn 2006.

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET DEPUTIES (Agenda item 8)

The Deputy (Stronger and Safer Communities) reported on the following issues within her portfolio:-

- appointment of Mr Matt Baker, the new sports development officer. His role will be to work closely with schools, youth service, clubs and other agencies to promote sport and physical activity/healthy lifestyles to young people (8 – 18 years)
- the opening of the new Boat House at Pittville Park

- the free tennis coaching sessions which had been successfully held across the borough over half term.
- a recent meeting of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which she had attended. The partnership is looking to commission projects for pump priming crime reduction which we need to reduce by 17%
- the launch of Partnership Working for a Safer Community at Shire Hall which she had attended with the Chief Executive to witness the official signing of the contract to fund additional police officers across the county
- the Disability Awareness Event which had been well attended but demonstrated the need for more people to join the forum to make their voices heard

The following responses were provided in respect of members questions:-

- the funding would provide 63 extra police officers across the county over the next three years. The breakdown per district was currently not known.
- The districts did not have to make any contribution to the £1.62 million funding, the partnership was between Gloucestershire County Council and the Police Authority and the pilot was the first of its kind.
- it was confirmed that the Cabinet would be working closely with the CDRP to look at ways of reducing the theft of cycles from the town centre.

The Leader reported on the following:-

- he had attended a positive meeting between Cheltenham Strategic Partnership and Severn Wye to look at ways of tackling fuel poverty.
- The Cabinet would be reviewing the St Paul's Regeneration proposals previously put forward in the context of the Midwinter Development, University and wider consultation
- Changes proposed for Mental Health Services – the Leader indicated that he would welcome some input from the members of Social and Community O & S on the council's response to the consultation document

The Leader indicated that responses to the following questions would be provided at the next meeting:

- 1) How many disability adaptations at Leisure@cheltenham, promised at the Social and Community Overview O & S held at the centre in February 2006 have been delivered?
- 2) What is the Cabinet doing to reduce the homelessness numbers and to speed up the re-housing of homeless households by Registered Social Landlords?

The Leader commented that if members required detailed responses from Deputies at Committee meetings then advance notice of the questions would be useful to allow time for preparation.

The Chairman thanked the Deputies for their briefings. She reminded the Committee that previously all the Deputies relevant to Social and Community had attended for the briefing session. However she felt that 2 deputies per meeting on an alternate basis might be more effective in future. Questions to Deputies not in attendance could be fed back for a response at the next meeting.

9. PRESENTATION BY GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOUSING ASSOCIATION (Agenda item 9)

Mr Ian Richardson, Chief Executive of GHA introduced his senior management team to the Committee and gave a presentation about the work of GHA covering the following key areas:-

- Development activities including lead developer role through the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Housing Market Partnership and through New Futures Partnership
- Shared ownership properties managed by GHA and their role in relation to Homebuy
- Relationship with tenants, approach to customer care, customer satisfaction levels
- Current issues and associated plans to address these

(A copy of the presentation is available from Democratic Services on request).

The following responses were provided in respect of members questions and comments:-

- whilst GHA had been subject to special measures as directed by the Housing Corporation, the development programme had not been frozen. Mr Richardson indicated that he had been brought in specifically to address the issues highlighted by the Housing Corporation and the special measures had now been lifted in view of the good progress made.
- there was no 'typical customer' profile. The promotion of new affordable housing for rent and sale was through partnership working with local authorities and local residents. The GHA website was being developed and regularly updated with information about the Homebuy scheme and shared ownership schemes.
- Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) testing is carried out on all properties to measure energy efficiency and the profile was very good particularly the Eco homes. An affordable warmth policy was currently being developed.
- strict affordability assessments were undertaken in respect of shared ownership. Everything is done to assist customers who may come into financial difficulties and only one instance of repossession was known.
- The receipt of nominations from the council with a clear prioritised list would be welcomed as clients did not always accept what was being offered. GHA supported the introduction of the Countywide Choice Based Lettings Scheme from April 2008, when RSL's will share the housing register and will be able to carry out their own lettings directly.

The Chairman commented that it was important to ensure that small pockets of homes in Cheltenham that were managed by GHA were not overlooked whilst the focus was on the new build schemes. She thanked Mr Richardson and his senior management team for attending the meeting which she had found very interesting and informative.

10. GLOUCESTERSHIRE NHS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Miss Hall, the council's representative of GOSC provided an oral update on a recent meeting of the Committee she had attended to receive a report from the Chief Executives of the Gloucestershire PCT's on the proposed savings plan for the NHS in Gloucestershire and the formal consultation proposals. She provided details of the proposed savings which will impact upon the residents of Cheltenham and indicated that following questions and debate the consultation period was extended from five to the full twelve weeks. She outlined the stages of the formal consultation process and the involvement of GOSC as a statutory consultee. Councillor Miss Hall encouraged members to attend one of the public consultation events to hear the presentation and take part in

question and answer sessions. It was important for everyone to have their say before it was too late.

In response to questions Councillor Miss Hall indicated that GOSC took its role very seriously and would endeavour throughout the consultation period to ensure the views of those with an interest were represented and do everything in its power to protect the interests of residents in Gloucestershire.

11. COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2006/07 AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (Agenda item 11)

The Committee agreed to defer the committee workplan to the next meeting to allow more time for consideration. Members were asked to look at Appendix A of the report and come up with some areas for review or particular issues of interest for possible inclusion in the workplan.

12. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF ENFORCEMENT FUNCTIONS

The Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) introduced this Information/Discussion paper which had been circulated with the agenda. The paper provided an update following the review of Enforcement Functions and a joined up approach to tackling anti-social behaviour which had been considered by the Committee in February 2005 and informed members of the recent divisional review of resources.

The Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) provided the following response to members' questions and comments:-

- Since the initial review, meetings have been taking place between the Acting Assistant Director Public Protection and the Assistant Director Environmental Maintenance to progress the joined up approach. Joint working had also been undertaken in response to the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which contain a range of powers designed to improve the quality of the local environment. A report on this had recently been considered by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Education and raising awareness amongst all sections of the community was key to delivering a robust environmental enforcement strategy. A strong publicity campaign on environmental crime including publicising successful prosecutions will be introduced shortly. Other ways of encouraging community engagement included going out onto the streets, talking to groups and schools and enhancing the website information.

The Chairman thanked the Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) for her update and for her patience in waiting her turn as it had been a longer than usual meeting.

13. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

The Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. She briefly explained that the production of an annual Food Safety Plan was a statutory requirement in order to be monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency. She was very pleased to report that 100% food inspections had been achieved in 2005/06.

The Committee congratulated the Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) and her

team in this achievement.

The Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) agreed to investigate concerns raised by Councillor Allen regarding the noise disturbance caused by the trailers used for the storage of modular food.

Councillor Webster commented that the Food Safety Service team must be stretched with additional resources only being available for community safety. In response, the Acting Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that the delivery of statutory duties and the required levels of inspection were currently met through a risk based approach and joint working with the Health and Safety Executive. In the event of any emergencies resources are shared across the County, however resources were stretched within the service and performance would continue to be monitored closely.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the performance against the 2005/06 plan and approves the revised plan for 2006/07.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 10th July 2006

**Councillor Mrs B Driver
Chairman**

Appendix A

Appointment of non-voting co-opted members to the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Housing Tenant Representative – Cheltenham Federation of Tenants and Leaseholders

Mrs L Steers
Substitute - Mr S Packer

2. Cheltenham Arts Council

Mrs H Kitchin
Substitute – Mr T Moore-Scott

3. Cheltenham Youth Council

Mr M Boyes
Substitute – Mr M Jelfs

4. Disability Forum

Jackie Sallis
Substitute – Daphne Wheeler